

# Mrs. J. A. Henry, National Bank President

By Karl Sanford Kabelac

**O**KLAHOMA WAS NOT YET A STATE WHEN THE FIRST National Bank of Leger (charter #6113) was founded in 1902. The founding president was John Armstrong Henry. Two years later the name of the community was changed to Altus, and thus the bank became The First National Bank of Altus.

Altus is the county seat of Jackson County. It is in the southern part of the state, just north of the border with Texas. Its post office was established in 1890. The community perhaps drew its name from the fact that it is on higher ground than nearby land, and from the fact that an early settler was from Altus, Arkansas. From 1901 to 1904 it was named Leger after a railroad official, but then the name was changed back to Altus.

Mary (Elda) E. Cobb was born in Bonham, Texas, on February 22, 1879. She married John Armstrong Henry on May 10, 1899.

Shortly after his death on March 7, 1925, she was elected president of the bank. In an article in the Altus newspaper headlined, "Wife Succeeds Henry in Bank" it was noted that although she would be president, she would not be

the active head of the bank. That role would be in the hands of the active vice president and the cashier.

Unfortunately, five and half years later, local economic conditions forced the closing of the bank on September 22, 1930. Early hopes to reopen it did not come to be.

Mrs. Henry died in Norman, Oklahoma, at the age of 91 on August 19, 1970. She was survived by a son and a daughter, grandchildren and great grandchildren.


## Sources and acknowledgments

Past issues of *The Altus Times-Democrat* have been most helpful. The March 13, 1925, issue carried two articles relating to the bank following the death

of J. A. Henry. The September 22 and 23, 1930, issues carried articles about the closing of the bank, and the August 23, 1970, issue carried Mrs. Henry's obituary. Cecil Chesser, *Across the Lonely Years; the Story of Jackson County* (1971), p. 280-281, has information about the Henry family. The help of Tammy L. Davis of the Southern Prairie Library System in Altus is gratefully acknowledged. ❖

A Series 1929 note from a 1992 CAA auction with Mrs. J. A. Henry's facsimile signatures as president of the bank. It is one of only 2, 298 Series 1929 notes issued by the bank. (Courtesy Heritage Auctions)

### OKLAHOMA



2124 Altus - \$10.00 Ty. 1 The First NB Ch. # 6113

An extremely rare note, with no offerings from this bank since an appearance on a 1968 price list, but especially desirable because Mrs. J.A. Henry signs as President, a most unusual signature on a small size national. **Very Good-Fine.** (250-400)